

Mill Valley Oral History Program
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DON HUNTER

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Ed Addeo in 2015**

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TITLE: Oral History of Don Hunter
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In this oral history, former Mill Valley City Manager Don Hunter recounts a life deeply committed to the community. Born in San Jose, Don moved to Mill Valley at the age of three. He recollects his childhood in Mill Valley, his schooling at all levels, including many unforgettable teachers at Tamalpais High, his enthusiastic participation in sports, the local music scene during the 1960s, his family life, and his work. Don began working for the city of Mill Valley in 1973 when he took a job with the Parks and Recreation Department, retiring 35 years later as city manager. From his years working for the city, Don discusses various town projects, such as the development of Bayfront Park, the construction of the new community center, and the library expansion project, paying tribute to many of Mill Valley's elected officials over the decades as well as to the community's impressive and exceptional ability to accomplish things together.

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Oral History of Don Hunter
August 25th, 2015

Editor's note: This transcript has been reviewed by Don Hunter, who made minor corrections.

0:00:00 Ed Addeo: Okay. This is Ed Addeo. This is August the 25th, 2015. We're in the conference room at the Mill Valley Library, and I'm speaking with Don Hunter, a retired city manager of the city of Mill Valley. And Don, we'll start with — let's go as far back as you know about your ancestry.

0:00:27 Don Hunter: Okay. I know from another relative that we can trace ourselves all the way to Scotland. But when we get to the United States, we lose a few generations. [chuckles] So, what I really have any significant information on, is just my grandparents on both sides of the family. On my mother's side I know less, because we just spent less time with them. They were in southern California, that's where mom was born and raised. Her mother was Ruth Ewing, and her father was Robert Ewing.

0:01:02 Ed Addeo: What part of southern California?

0:01:03 Don Hunter: Covina.

0:01:04 Ed Addeo: Covina?

0:01:05 Don Hunter: Yeah. And they moved around, but they were in Anaheim a little bit, but Covina is where they spent most of the time when they were being raised. And her father was a big thinker, always gonna have the next big thing, but it never really panned out too well. Her mother was a jewelry maker, and that's one of things I do remember is later in life she moved to San Jose, and when I was going to San Jose State my grandmother lived about five blocks from me. So I'd go down and have dinner with her occasionally, and I'd get to see her making jewelry. She did cloisonné and those sort of things. Then on my father's side, his mother, my grandmother, was Ethel Clark, and then she became Ethel Hunter. She was a school principal and best cook I've been around in my life. She was a traditional grandmother with the pies on the windowsill when you came to visit. My grandfather, Roy, was a general contractor, who during the Depression went to work for the Watsonville School District as a custodian, ended up being head of custodial services for the school district.

0:02:23 Ed Addeo: They lived in Watsonville?

0:02:25 Don Hunter: Lived in Watsonville, and we saw a lot of them. That was the family growing up, was we'd go and visit them, and dad's sister who lived there, and her husband. So that was the family we were closest to. We have on tape, Grandma Hunter, telling about going to Yosemite in a covered wagon.

0:02:48 Ed Addeo: Wow.

0:02:49 Don Hunter: She told great stories and lived a great life, I think. She died at 98, in the Odd Fellows Home in Los Gatos. And for a woman who was almost 300 pounds —

0:03:04 Ed Addeo: Wow.

0:03:04 Don Hunter: She was very active till the end. So, those were good memories. I wish we'd been closer to the other side of the family, but it didn't happen. Then I have a sister, who's two years older than me. She lives in Novato, and —

0:03:25 Ed Addeo: What's her name?

0:03:26 Don Hunter: Gayle. At this point she's working for PricewaterhouseCoopers. Right. That's right. As an office manager, in San Francisco, so we're close to her, too. So most of the family stayed in the same area. My parents lived in Mill Valley while we were growing up, and retired in Napa.

0:03:47 Ed Addeo: So you were born in Watsonville?

0:03:49 Don Hunter: I was actually born in San Jose. My parents, at that point, had moved to Los Gatos.

0:04:00 Ed Addeo: Oh, okay.

0:04:00 Don Hunter: And I was in Los Gatos until I was like three years old, and then we moved to Mill Valley. Dad was with B of A¹, and at that point you could only pass up so many transfers or else you stopped getting promoted. So he took the transfer to Mill Valley, and that's how we got here.

0:04:20 Ed Addeo: You once told me the story about, during the war, or before the war, or after the war, your father had an opportunity to —

0:04:30 Don Hunter: After the war.

0:04:30 Ed Addeo: Join the startup outfit?

0:04:31 Don Hunter: After the war, after the war — I think what we were talking about is the fact that both of my parents were Depression kids, they were raised during the Depression, and my mother, in particular, because of her father's penchant for always chasing the dream, had a tough time during the Depression. They were on the street some. So dad got a job with B of A, and it was a good job, and he was paid every two weeks, and so he got — an old college roommate of his asked him if he was interested in coming to work for a new company that these guys were starting up. They needed a chief financial officer, and my mother just said, "No. You're not giving up that paycheck. We

¹ Bank of America—Ed.

need that paycheck every two weeks.” And so, dad didn’t go to work for Hewlett Packard. [laughter]

0:05:18 Ed Addeo: I love that story.

0:05:19 Don Hunter: It’s the truth. Yeah. It’s —

0:05:21 Ed Addeo: There’s two guys in a garage in Palo Alto.

0:05:23 Don Hunter: Two guys in a garage, and his buddy was their operating officer. His old college buddy was their first operating officer. He was one of their first employees, and worked for them until he retired.

0:05:33 Ed Addeo: Wow.

0:05:33 Don Hunter: And did very well. [chuckles]

0:05:35 Ed Addeo: Yes.

0:05:36 Don Hunter: So —

0:05:36 Ed Addeo: The janitor did very well.

0:05:38 Don Hunter: Yeah. Yeah. It’s always been something that my mother laughs about, but dad doesn’t laugh all the time. [laughs] Or didn’t. Both my parents have passed away. But —

0:05:51 Ed Addeo: So he had a career with Bank of America?

0:05:53 Don Hunter: Yeah. 40 years. That was back in the days, when B of A, like most employers, really took care of people. They counted his years in the service as years with the bank for retirement purposes, and they held his job, and he’d only been with them little over a year before he was drafted into the service. But they saved the job, they counted it towards retirement, and that was back in the day where AP Giannini was still running Bank of America, and it was really a family-oriented business.

0:06:27 Ed Addeo: Did your father see any action in World War II?

0:06:30 Don Hunter: My father did. He was in the Pacific Theater and he landed on Iwo Jima.

0:06:36 Ed Addeo: Oh, wow.

0:06:37 Don Hunter: And he was army, not marines, so he wasn’t the first wave in. But there was still artillery being shelled on the beaches when he came in. It was very interesting. He didn’t talk about that much until much later in life. I’m not sure if it just

was memories he didn't wanna dredge up. But we all kind of pushed him a little bit towards the end of his life and he told the whole stories and everything. He was a staff sergeant. He was mainly clerical more than he — he carried a gun and all that stuff, but he was mainly clerical for the commander. And he told one great story where the commander said, "Sergeant, I want you to get a jeep. We're going up to the top of the hill and see what's going on." They got in a jeep. Dad drove them to the top of the hill and they were just being shelled right and left and the commander said, "I think we oughta go down now." [chuckles] But it was interesting. He spent all of the war in the Pacific. But that was the most exciting thing.

0:07:35 Ed Addeo: That's great. A lot of those World War II heroes didn't talk about it for years, and years, and years.

0:07:42 Don Hunter: Yeah. He still tells of, or told before he passed away, he told, not really wanting to get to know people because you were gonna lose them.

0:07:52 Ed Addeo: Yeah, yeah. Friends.

0:07:54 Don Hunter: Yeah.

0:07:55 Ed Addeo: Wow. Okay, so you moved to Mill Valley when you were three.

0:08:00 Don Hunter: Correct.

0:08:00 Ed Addeo: And where did you live?

0:08:01 Don Hunter: I lived on the corner of Nelson and East Blithedale, 118 Nelson Avenue, right across from Kite Hill. And that was back in the day where you could get the neighborhood boys together and race boats in the gutters of Blithedale 'cause there just wasn't much traffic.

0:08:18 Ed Addeo: Yeah, and climb up on Kite Hill.

0:08:20 Don Hunter: Kite Hill and cardboard slide. And when we got more advanced, we built sleds and used paraffin on the runners to get them to go good down the hill, and it was big fun. Great place to be a kid.

0:08:30 Ed Addeo: Yeah.

0:08:31 Don Hunter: Yeah.

0:08:32 Ed Addeo: What local school would you go to, then?

0:08:36 Don Hunter: Well, I should have gone to Park, but because of districting and number of kids and everything, I started at Alto.

0:08:44 Ed Addeo: Alto?

0:08:44 Don Hunter: Alto which is now a private school, but it's leased by the school district, too. I don't know what the name of it is, but it's over there next to Edna Maguire. Next building over was Alto School.

0:08:54 Ed Addeo: That's right, yeah.

0:08:56 Don Hunter: And I did that for one year. And then they redistrict again and I finished at Park. I went back to Park and I went through there through sixth grade, because back then it was K-6, and then I went to Edna Maguire, which was then the junior high, seven, eight, and then I went on to Tam. Park School was a great place to go to school. First of all, you could walk straight down Blithedale and be there in 10 minutes from my house, and I was probably one of the furthest away from school. And they had this great softball diamond under the big trees on — is that Elm Avenue there, by the stop light? I think that's Elm going down.

0:09:39 Ed Addeo: Elm, yeah.

0:09:39 Don Hunter: Yeah, and we would go out there and we would play these softball games, play work out. Get somebody out, all the positions move up one, and then when you get to hit, you get to bat until you make an out. And I just remember that being —

0:09:54 Ed Addeo: Was that sand and grass or asphalt?

0:09:55 Don Hunter: No, no, that was asphalt. I don't think, until you got to junior high, any of the elementary schools had anything but asphalt at that time. But there was — Bill Castelli was a fifth-grade teacher there. It was probably my first experience with a male teacher.

0:10:15 Ed Addeo: Castelli?

0:10:15 Don Hunter: Castelli, C-A-S. And he was just great. He'd go out. He'd organize these ball games, and if he'd need to, he'd pitch. He was wonderful. Then when I went to Edna Maguire, by this point my mother had gone back to work and she was teaching at Edna Maguire. She was teaching women's PE. She ended her career at Homestead as a fifth-grade teacher. But, she tells the story — it's not all that different than now. We read about the teacher shortage everywhere now that's going. Well, back then, there was, too. She was hired at a cocktail party where the superintendent of the school had heard she was a teacher. He came over and chatted for a while, and then offered her a job at the party.

0:11:02 Ed Addeo: Wow.

0:11:03 Don Hunter: Just because they needed bodies, and she was a certificated

teacher. And so, it wasn't the greatest thing in the world having your mom, especially in junior high when you're in seventh and eighth grade, and you're discovering girls for the first time, and your mom's the girls PE teacher. It worked, but it wasn't the best thing I ever did in my life. [chuckles]

0:11:25: But that was what we did back then. Everybody went to the same school. All the schools fed into the junior high and so that's where you started meeting people from around town. Your circle of friends expanded. And then went on to Tam High from there. But when I was at Park and at Alto, that's when I started playing Little League ball. 1958, I think, was the first year they opened Boyle Park for Little League. 'Cause prior to that, it had been a semi-pro field.

0:12:01 Ed Addeo: Yeah, that's what I've heard.

0:12:03 Don Hunter: Yeah. Mill Valley Merchants was the name of the team, and they got big name people to play there; DiMaggio played there.

0:12:09 Ed Addeo: No kidding?

0:12:09 Don Hunter: Yeah. Way back when, not long before my time, but way back when, he played there. And the one diamond was down by what's now the tennis club and it fanned out, coming back towards Blithedale and they played some good games there. The Merchants moved to Project 17 afterwards.

0:12:31 Ed Addeo: Where's that?

0:12:32 Don Hunter: Project 17 is what's now the middle school —

0:12:34 Ed Addeo: Oh yes.

0:12:35 Don Hunter: — and the community center. 17 'cause it was 17 acres. And that was a hoot 'cause by then I was old enough to go watch, and to try and make money because of all the marsh around there, they'd pay you a dime if you could catch a foul ball before it got to the water.

0:12:51 Ed Addeo: Oh, really? [chuckles]

0:12:52 Don Hunter: So the kids would be all down there with their gloves trying to make some money. But it was a hoot because it settled so badly there. They didn't do the things they do now to compact the soil. So that you could see a guy leaving left field, heading towards center and by the time he got to center, you could only see the top half of his body 'cause he's down in this big hollow. But that was fun. And then when we played Little League at Boyle, everybody moved there, that was — there was still the two leagues, then it was National and American, but National was all kids within the city limits. American was all the kids in the unincorporated areas. So, Homestead, Tam Valley, those were all the American League, they just did it by addresses.

0:13:35 Ed Addeo: That's right, they played across from — the closest one would be the National League and the other one, near the tennis club, was the American League.

0:13:43 Don Hunter: Exactly. Exactly. And everybody played in the same place. There wasn't a minor league field, a major league field, you know. Certain nights were major league, certain nights were minor league. That's all there was, there wasn't anything less than minor, there were just the two leagues playing in the — if I recall correctly, there couldn't have been more than six teams in any league 'cause it just wasn't that big.

0:14:02 Ed Addeo: No there weren't 'cause I coached and managed there for about 15 years. And then I remember the tee-ball, the peewee leagues were over where what is now Hockey Park, is that right?

0:14:13 Don Hunter: Yeah, yeah. Yes. That was after my time, they didn't have those when I played, but when I grew up they started that over there and then — my first experience with Little League was the year before they opened Boyle, we played out of Alto school and it was all dirt with a lot of rock. You could be right squared up on a grounder and it'd go right over your shoulder 'cause it hit a rock, you were lucky if it didn't hit you. So Boyle was a big thing when they opened that for us.

0:14:45 Ed Addeo: Yeah. Yeah.

0:14:46 Don Hunter: So that takes me through junior high. There was one teacher at junior high that I just loved, Martha Robinson, taught social studies and English. And I'll never forget, she always had this thing about fresh air in the classroom. So if it was stuffy or the windows were closed, she would call somebody by name and say, "Would you be so kind and condescending as to stoop so low without bending as to open a window?" [chuckles]

0:15:19: She was great, she would give — we had to build a globe theater. It's not easy, that's pretty intricate, you've got dowels and all these things. And two or three kids, they brought these things in, you looked at it and you go, "How did they do that?" Well, their parents did it is how they did it, of course. And mine was barely standing up, and I still remember I got an A 'cause she knows I did it myself, even though it was kinda going like this. [chuckles] But she was a great teacher. Then I went on to Tam, started there in '63 and one of the first memories was JFK being shot, when I was a freshman. That was probably, looking back on it, was probably when I kinda woke up to the world outside of Mill Valley.

0:16:15 Ed Addeo: That's right. Now you're in school at the time 'cause I recall —

0:16:17 Don Hunter: Yeah. It was in November, wasn't it? It was November if I'm recalling correctly.

0:16:20 Ed Addeo: I recall I got a phone call from my wife at work and it was about 9:30 in the morning when we heard.

0:16:27 Don Hunter: I know it was morning, I don't know what time. Yeah, and they came on the loud speakers and they let us out of class and we could wander around campus and talk. We didn't go home, but they just stopped teaching. And it really, it really was like, "Camelot's over." It was just a dose of reality. I mean, I was not actively involved in politics at the time, but a lot of the kids that were, were just devastated, and at that point we all started paying attention more. Maybe it was just 'cause I was a freshman in high school and it was time anyhow, but that was pretty impressive. Then in the four years I was there, the music scene in the area blew up. We had Sopwith Camel here, we had Jefferson Airplane here, we had Grateful Dead here — all of them, in Marin but also in Haight-Ashbury, and we had a local group called Clover.

0:17:39 Ed Addeo: Yeah. It was about 1965 when the flower children came in and all that.

0:17:44 Don Hunter: Yeah. '65, '66. Then the "Summer of Love" was '67, the year I graduated.

0:17:48 Ed Addeo: That's right.

0:17:50 Don Hunter: And I have to admit I spent a little time in Haight-Ashbury then, soaking up the scene. I was more of an onlooker. I was just flabbergasted at the clothes and the hair and the whole — it was just a scene. But lots of local music too. Alex Call had this band called Clover, and they had this kid that I played Pony League with, that played harmonica for him, kid named Hugh Cregg, who was Huey Lewis Cregg. Huey got his start with Clover. And so all of that was going on. It was pretty interesting to be around him and watch it all go, because you got that and then at the same time my senior yearbook was dedicated to the first guy from Tam to die in Vietnam. He left school after his junior year. He was our age and he died that year. So Vietnam was on us. And that made you pay attention to world politics because it was gonna affect you. It was going to be about, "Are you going to Vietnam?" And I spent a lot of time thinking and talking with my dad.

0:19:15 Ed Addeo: Worried about the draft?

0:19:16 Don Hunter: Worried about what I'd do if I was drafted. Jack Bartlett was our minister at the time, and is still a good friend, and I talked to Jack a lot about it. Was I a conscientious objector? I wasn't really, I don't think, but I certainly felt the war in Vietnam was wrong. And then, I hit the lottery, literally. I was —

0:19:38 Ed Addeo: The lottery?

0:19:39 Don Hunter: The lottery. I went to college, so I had my student deferment, and my sophomore year in college they held the first draft lottery. They actually pulled

numbers, birthday dates, but numbers. Number one was September whatever it was and all the way through 365, and then they drafted by those numbers to get your draft count. I was draft number 197 and at the end of my junior year of college I got a letter from my draft board saying that I had been transferred from 2F student deferment to 1A, and I just — “What? I’ve got another year here!” [laughs] And I called the draft board and this wonderfully nice lady said, “Yes, we have made our final call for this year and we called through number 196. Everything higher than 196 we’re putting in the 1A pool so that come December 31st, New Year’s this year, you all are out of the draft unless we go through all 365 next year.” And of course they weren’t gonna do that. That was every eligible person. So, I didn’t want to be rude but I said, “You wouldn’t mind putting that in writing would you?” [laughs]

0:20:55 Don Hunter: And she did. And that was my best New Year’s Eve ever.

0:20:58 Ed Addeo: Wow.

0:21:00 Don Hunter: So I never really had to face the decision, and I did get the deferment, but I lost friends in Vietnam. That was my generation that was there.

0:21:12 Ed Addeo: Yeah.

0:21:13 Don Hunter: And I had friends who came back that weren’t the same, and I think everyone can tell you the same story.

0:21:19 Ed Addeo: Yeah.

0:21:20 Don Hunter: So, that was probably the most defining thing of the era for us.

0:21:25 Ed Addeo: Yeah.

0:21:26 Don Hunter: But, high school before I leave it, other than the specific instances that kind of make you look at the bigger world, was a heck of a fun time at Tam High. It was a meld of Sausalito, Mill Valley, the beach kids, which were a breed unto themselves, that came over the hill.

0:21:49 Ed Addeo: That’s right.

0:21:50 Don Hunter: Marin City and then we got all the military brats from Fort Baker.

0:21:54 Ed Addeo: Oh yeah.

0:21:54 Don Hunter: So we had all sorts of people there, and for the most part got along really well. The real first hippies were the beach kids. Those were the ones that were the precursor to the Summer of Love. They were all long hair, and “How fast can I get out of here and get surfing,” you know? [chuckles]

0:22:16 Ed Addeo: Yeah.

0:22:17 Don Hunter: It was interesting. It was the whole experience. You had the junior prom and the senior ball, the Sadie Hawkins Day dances. All the old stuff that I'm not even sure they still do anymore. And everybody played sports.

0:22:31 Ed Addeo: From what I've heard over the past couple of years, there was a pretty dedicated group of teachers there too.

0:22:38 Don Hunter: There was a great group of teachers. I think it speaks volumes to the principals and the administration, but also to the fact that they had an engaged student body. Because teachers came there and they stayed. You didn't have a lot of turnover. My favorite was Robert Sherman, an English teacher. He was just a great, great man in terms of his teaching ability. He cared about every student he had. But you can go through Dwayne Smith and all of them there, even George Gustafson, who by the time I was there must have been 70, teaching PE. They were always checking in with you, "Are you okay? Are you gonna come out for this team? Are you gonna do that?" I was really into journalism in high school, and I wrote for the *Tam High News*. I was the sports editor when I was a junior, and I was editor-in-chief when I was a senior.

0:23:33 Ed Addeo: Oh wow.

0:23:34 Don Hunter: And so we had a young, exciting journalism teacher who was probably the first African American teacher I'd ever had. Her name was Martha Myrick and she just made you get excited about it. She did things like, when I was on the news staff and she had a freshman writing class, she'd have me chase somebody else in the staff though the room, jump out the window in the back, and keep running, and then she'd make the kids write about what they'd just saw. She was a pretty fun person to have as a teacher. She got me very, very pumped up about it. I started writing sports 'cause I love sports. The more and more I wrote, I kind of went into the overall news thing. That's what I started out in college is journalism major. She was great. Hells Bells Hawkins was a math teacher. Back in the day when he could still —

0:24:39 Ed Addeo: Hells Bells Hawkins?

0:24:41 Don Hunter: I don't even know what his first name was. It was Mr. Hawkins, but we all called him Hells Bells Hawkins 'cause when he would get mad he'd say "Hell's bells." Ernie Bergman, who is still around, is a wonderful friend. He had a tendency to talk in class. And so Mr. Hawkins would bounce erasers off him, just turn around at the board, and "Voop!" You could do that back then.

0:25:17: The only teacher I had that wasn't as good as I'd hoped was Henri Boussy, who's — he's actually got a piece in the oral history room². Because he was an art teacher. He was a great art teacher, but because he spoke French, they made him teach

² Boussy's oral history is available at the Lucretia Little History Room, Mill Valley Public Library.—Ed.

French. He just wasn't that good of a French teacher. He was a great art teacher. Other than that, I can't think of —

0:25:42 Ed Addeo: Henri Boussy?

0:25:43 Don Hunter: Yeah.

0:25:44 Ed Addeo: How do you spell that?

0:25:46 Don Hunter: B-O-U-S-S-Y, I think.

0:25:49 Ed Addeo: Okay. I can look it up.

0:25:52 Don Hunter: Yeah, but other than that, I really can't think of a bad teacher I had. Of course, Willie Hector was in the PE Department. He had just come off of a pro football career so everybody loved hanging around with him. It was a great time. I ran cross country. I played baseball. I played basketball. I ran — gave up baseball after my sophomore year, and ran track. You had a constant group of friends. As soon as school was out, you were on the field with somebody. It was at a day when the football game was Friday night, the whole school went. You filled the stands. That doesn't happen anymore, either. The basketball games would sell out. It was what there was to do. It was fun.

0:26:37 Ed Addeo: Let's go to college, now. You went to San Jose State.

0:26:40 Don Hunter: I did.

0:26:41 Ed Addeo: As a journalism major.

0:26:42 Don Hunter: Yeah, because at that point it had a great reputation as a journalism school. Actually, I still remember Dwight Bentel was the dean of the school, and he was quite well thought of. After about a year, I figured out there's no money in it.

0:27:01 Ed Addeo: In journalism?

0:27:02 Don Hunter: In journalism. Unless you're that top small percentage that are writing books or columns or something, there's not much money in it working for the *Mill Valley Record* or the *Mill Valley Herald*. I changed my major, and I went into public administration/parks and recreation.

0:27:25 Ed Addeo: That went well with your love of sports?

0:27:28 Don Hunter: Exactly. It went well with the love of sports, and I'd been working for the Park and Recreation Department in Mill Valley since I was a sophomore in high school doing summer day camps and stuff. I knew what the work was. I found out after I changed my major that there's lots of things you can do in that. There's therapeutic

recreation. There's geriatric recreation. There's commercial recreation. Everybody who's running Disneyland and Six Flags and all of those people, that's their background. But I went into municipal recreation because I, again, I liked the sports. I wanted to stay with running sports leagues and putting on events and taking trips and doing all of those things. That's how I got started. I had a good thing going. I got out in four years. Nobody does that. I went through college in four years — I could have stretched it to six like most of them do now — and went right to work. That's what you did back then.

0:28:29 Ed Addeo: Your first job was?

0:28:31 Don Hunter: My first full-time job was with the city of Ferguson, Missouri, which is in the news a little bit now.

0:28:36 Ed Addeo: In the news.

0:28:39 Don Hunter: Ferguson is a suburb of St. Louis. At that point, St. Louis was surrounded by 99 incorporated cities, some as small as 400 people. Some, like Ferguson, up in the 22,000-23,000 range. I think the biggest one was 40-something thousand. At the time that I was there, Ferguson was primarily a middle-class white community. But it was next to a primarily African-American community, Kinlock.

0:29:12 Ed Addeo: What's the name of it?

0:29:12 Don Hunter: Kinlock. K-I-N-L-O-C-K. We had a big dust-up there because one of our parks was right on the border. City council, or the mayor I guess it was — I think it was just the mayor, wanted the basketball hoops taken out 'cause the kids from Kinlock were coming over to play.

0:29:33 Ed Addeo: He didn't want the black kids playing on the white kids' court?

0:29:36 Don Hunter: Yeah, didn't want the black kids playing on the white court.

0:29:37 Ed Addeo: Wow.

0:29:38 Don Hunter: My boss, who was a California kid like me, refused. He got in all sorts of trouble, and was out of a job for a little bit before the calmer heads of the attorneys prevailed.

0:29:48 Ed Addeo: So even back then, there was some tension going on?

0:29:52 Don Hunter: There was tension. I have to tell you, when I was in St. Louis — that was my one year. I went one year. Literally, day to day, one year, I was in St. Louis. My first experience outside of California, and having gone to Tam High with a bunch of black kids, some from Marin City, some from Fort Baker, military kids, it never dawned on me that there was gonna be this kind of type of separation of races that I saw back in early '70s in St. Louis. It was pretty stark and surprising. And, on my first wrong turn

into East St. Louis was an interesting experience. There really was some bad unemployment and ghettos in St. Louis proper. So, that was interesting for me. It was nearly one of those life experiences. Probably, the highlight of my time in Missouri I was learning to play ice hockey.

0:31:03 Ed Addeo: Ice hockey?

0:31:04 Don Hunter: Yeah. Well, our parks department was in charge of the ponds. They'd freeze, and we'd put out garbage cans and fires and stuff, and we'd have staff there in the evenings. Susan and I would go down, skate arm in arm on frozen ponds in the winter. It was great fun. We both learned to skate while we were there.

0:31:23 Ed Addeo: That's right. They had real winter times there.

0:31:25 Don Hunter: Real winter time, yes. And so, we had a department hockey team that played in one of our own leagues. They put me on a team and let me play. And they even set me up to score one goal. They said, "Don't come down to this end. You just wait here. We'll come down." They cleared out the goal and passed me the puck and sure enough, I got it in the net. That was a lot of fun. I loved it.

0:31:48 Ed Addeo: That's great.

0:31:50 Don Hunter: I loved winter, by the way. I hated summer.

0:31:52 Ed Addeo: In St. Louis.

0:31:54 Don Hunter: Hot, humid and muggy.

0:31:56 Ed Addeo: I'll bet.

0:31:56 Don Hunter: Yeah.

0:31:57 Ed Addeo: Yeah. So, you mentioned Susan. She was with you in Ferguson.

0:32:01 Don Hunter: Right.

0:32:01 Ed Addeo: So, let's go back to when you met her. How'd you meet Susan?

0:32:04 Don Hunter: I met Susan at a wine tasting party in San Diego.

0:32:08 Ed Addeo: A wine tasting.

0:32:09 Don Hunter: Yeah. It was part of the California Park and Recreation Society, the professional society for people in Parks and Recreation. Susan was a student. I had just graduated and was working part time with the city of Mill Valley. And I was attending this looking for my first full-time job.

0:32:31 Ed Addeo: What was her name?

0:32:32 Don Hunter: Susan Hamilton.

0:32:33 Ed Addeo: Hamilton.

0:32:34 Don Hunter: And the local North Bay chapter of the Parks and Recreation Center always held a wine tasting 'cause Napa and all the other cities would go get donations and bring the wine down. And I met this beautiful girl there. I couldn't stop thinking about her. I got her phone number and called her when we got home. And we started going out.

0:33:03 Ed Addeo: Where did she live?

0:33:04 Don Hunter: San Jose. I was in Mill Valley at that time. We went out. This was probably June when we met. We went out for a little bit, and then she went to work for Camp Konocti at Konocti Harbor on Clear Lake.

0:33:20 Ed Addeo: Oh, yeah.

0:33:23 Don Hunter: So, I say, I was working part time for the city of Mill Valley. I'd get off at 10:00, drive up to Clear Lake. By that time, she'd have her campers put down for the night, and we'd sit around and talk. I'd drive back at 2:00 in the morning, and she'd go back to her cabin. And when she finished camp there, that's when I got offered the job in Ferguson, and we decided to get married because we had heard and checked that it was correct that they enforced their laws in cohabitation in Missouri. They didn't want you living together if you weren't married.

0:34:08 Ed Addeo: So, did you pop the question at the Camp Konocti?

0:34:11 Don Hunter: No, I popped the question by Alpine Lake, and she said yes. We got married in her parents' living room on two-weeks notice, 'cause I had to get back and take the job.

0:34:27 Ed Addeo: In San Jose.

0:34:27 Don Hunter: In San Jose. We had a reception at the local community center, and took off the next day for Missouri.

0:34:35 Ed Addeo: Wow.

0:34:35 Don Hunter: It worked out good. It's not a bad thing to start your married life away from everybody's family.

0:34:44 Ed Addeo: Well, you never had a real honeymoon.

0:34:46 Don Hunter: No. Never did. Until later. I took her to Hawaii when we'd been married three years. We went to Hawaii for a week, and that was our real honeymoon.

0:34:57 Ed Addeo: Oh, good.

0:34:58 Don Hunter: But, yeah. So, it was pretty quick, but it's worked. It's 43 years this November.

0:35:04 Ed Addeo: Long time.

0:35:05 Don Hunter: Yeah.

0:35:05 Ed Addeo: Especially for people in Marin.

0:35:07 Don Hunter: Yeah.

0:35:09 Ed Addeo: So, a year in Ferguson, then you came back here?

0:35:13 Don Hunter: I applied for a job at the city of Mill Valley that I had heard was open, and we drove out in our periwinkle blue AMC Gremlin.

0:35:25 Ed Addeo: What year was this?

0:35:27 Don Hunter: '73. I interviewed, and we drove back. And I got a letter when we — not long after we got back — offering me the job.

0:35:39 Ed Addeo: Did you start as Parks and Rec chairman?

0:35:42 Don Hunter: I started as recreation supervisor, which was really one of only two positions at that point. There was the director and then the supervisor. And so I started out as the supervisor. I was the supervisor for about nine months before the — the then director was having a little trouble getting along with the city manager. So he ended up going to the County of Marin.

0:36:08 Ed Addeo: Oh, that's right. What was his name?

0:36:09 Don Hunter: Don Dimitratos.

0:36:11 Ed Addeo: That's right.

0:36:12 Don Hunter: He went to the County of Marin and at that point, Ron Usher, who was the city manager, asked me into his office and asked me if I wanted the job and I was very quick to say, "No. I'm too young. I can't run a whole department." 'Cause I was 24 and he said, "Do you know how much it pays?" And I said, "No" and he told me, and I said, "Okay, I'll take it." [laughs]

0:36:42 Don Hunter: So, I did and —

0:36:46 Ed Addeo: What was the pay at that time?

0:36:47 Don Hunter: \$1,414 a month.

0:36:51 Ed Addeo: Wow, and you thought that was big-time money, huh?

0:36:54 Don Hunter: Well, when I graduated from college, I thought if I could ever make \$10,000 a year, I was set.

0:37:00 Ed Addeo: I remember those days.

0:37:01 Don Hunter: So, yeah, it was big-time money for me. I had people that I grew up with who were in the business world already making a lot more than that and then later on in life I had guys that never even went to college who ended up being general contractors who made a lot more than that. One friend —

0:37:19 Ed Addeo: My mother used to talk about “five-figure” meant making \$10,000 or more.

0:37:24 Don Hunter: Yeah, well, that was big. I thought I made it, so I took the job and I learned on the job. And I had great help from wonderful, wonderful people in my profession and in the city. Still my fondest memory was Bill Walsh, who was the police chief at that time. Bill, when we had our first big floods and stuff, he called me up and said, “Come on, we’re gonna go look.” And he’d take me around and he’d show me where the hot spots were. “If you look there, if it’s about that level, we’ve got trouble. If it doesn’t reach that level, don’t worry about it.” And then he’d take you another place and he’d drive around. He knew the city like the back of his hand, but he also knew the city council. ’Cause my first budget that I had to present to the city council I had asked for not very much but some money for teen programming ’cause I really wanted to get some night stuff going for the kids in town. And the council just was having none of it. So Bill Walsh stands up and he says, “Well, you can give Don the money now or you can give it to me later. We don’t give these kids something to do they’re gonna end up being my problem.” And they passed my budget. They gave me the money.

0:38:35 Ed Addeo: He was a good cop.

0:38:36 Don Hunter: He was a very good cop.

0:38:37 Ed Addeo: He lived in Sutton Manor or somewhere.

0:38:39 Don Hunter: He did, which by the way was my second house. I lived at 118 Nelson until we were in junior high and then we moved to 16 Somerset, directly across the street from Bill Walsh. So, I knew Bill growing up when he was just a cop cop. Bill

— I probably shouldn't tell this, get myself in trouble — but Bill chased me through the creeks in Boyle Park one night and didn't catch me.

0:39:10 Ed Addeo: That's funny.

0:39:12 Don Hunter: Somebody came up with this great idea that we go down to the tennis courts at Boyle Park and wait, and there were probably 15 of us, and wait 'til a cop car goes by and then throw eggs at it.

0:39:27 Ed Addeo: Oh my God.

0:39:28 Don Hunter: I wasn't real bright. I said, "Sure that sounds like — " So we do it, and we didn't know that this guy who suggested it had done this three or four times before, so they were waiting for him. So as soon as the squad car — there's cop cars on every side of Boyle Park, and the lights go on and all of us are just running. I went right down into the creek, and then I shot straight up the middle of the creek towards the tennis club. Then I went through that covert down there, came up the other side and went straight up the hill and over the hill and down into Sutton Manor. And I thought, "I'm great, I'm fine." I jump in my bed — knock, knock, knock — I'm asleep, I'm asleep, I'm asleep. Dad goes to the door and Bill's there and he says, "Charlie, is Don home?"

0:40:24 Ed Addeo: So he knew it was you?

0:40:25 Don Hunter: Well, he knew all the people involved and that I was friends with all those people. He didn't know it was me for sure. Dad walks into the bedroom, "Yeah, yeah, he's sound asleep Bill." "Okay, thanks." And the next day I go to breakfast and I got all these scratches on my arms and everything. Dad looks at me and says, "Have fun last night, Don?" No harm, no foul. But learned a lesson there too. Don't necessarily take somebody else's idea without doing a little research. But Bill was just marvelous helping me learn.

0:41:11 Don Hunter: Tom Newton, the planning director, was good at helping me learn. And didn't take too long 'till I had it to the point where at least I understood the basics of the job and how to do it. It's not a lot different than any other job where you're working with a large organization. You gotta establish relationships with the other departments, you've got to be able to help them when they need it so that they'll help you when you need it, and you've got to be able to understand what it is the public wants and that was always something that came relatively easy for me.

0:41:46 Ed Addeo: So some highlights of when you were chairman of Parks and Rec, I remember I was on the Parks and Rec commission when we got the idea for the Bayfront Park and the community center and Jenny Fulle. So talk about those things.

0:42:01 Don Hunter: Let's start with Jenny.

0:42:04 Ed Addeo: Little girl wanted to play Little League. I was chairman then.

0:42:09 Don Hunter: And Little League — maybe I’m thinking too nicely of them — but Little League — I don’t think it was so much that the local people didn’t want Jenny to play, but they were gonna lose their charter if they let her play. Little League, the national organization, wasn’t about to budge on the issue. So they were kind of in a rock and a hard place. They were saying, “No. She can’t play.” And if my memory serves correctly, wasn’t Sam Lloyd president of Little League at that time?

0:42:33 Ed Addeo: Yes, Sam was.

0:42:35 Don Hunter: Sam was a nice guy, and I don’t think he was discriminating. I think that he was trying to keep the league afloat, and so they were caught between a rock and a hard place, and Jenny ended up going to court.

0:42:48 Ed Addeo: I wrote a screenplay about that episode. Her mother was a single mom. She got calls. All the rednecks came out from under the woodwork. They got threats. Jenny was bullied at school. Eventually they went to court, Superior Court. Little League sent up psychiatrists from LA and all kinds of doctors explaining why girls couldn’t play baseball, because they weren’t built right, things like that. Went to court and the judge finally said — I read the transcripts — the judge finally said, “Either she plays Little League or I’m gonna shut it down all over the country.” And she got to play. It’s quite a story, actually.

0:43:36 Don Hunter: It is. And that whole doctors and psychiatrists stuff — I, to this day, remember in 1959 my Little League coach telling me he wished I could hit as well as my sister. [chuckles]

0:43:50 Ed Addeo: Really?

0:43:50 Don Hunter: Oh, my sister was a hell of an athlete. Girls could play, especially at that level. Mo’ne, what’s her name that just did the —

0:44:01 Ed Addeo: Oh, yeah. That little girl back east.³

0:44:03 Don Hunter: The little girl from Chicago, yeah. Clearly, not only played, but pitched at the Little League level. I think it gets a little more difficult. Although now she’s pitching at 60 feet with a traveling team. I read an article in *Sports Illustrated* on that. Anything’s possible. And the Pacifics just had a woman pitcher.

0:44:19 Ed Addeo: Yes, that’s right. Just recently.

0:44:22 Don Hunter: So, that was all bogus. That was just trying to keep the status quo. So that was interesting. That was a fun one. The Bayfront Park was interesting for two reasons. Number one, there was always the big controversy about, is there gonna be an access road to the public safety building?

³ Mo’ne Davis—Ed.

0:44:40 Ed Addeo: Yes, I remember that too.

0:44:43 Don Hunter: Because the school district and the city traded lands for — we got where the Public Safety building is, they got Project 17. And they built a middle school. So, now you've got a major concentration of students. Plus, not long after that — 'cause my father was on the first board of the Redwoods when they opened — now you had a major concentration of seniors that our fire department and police department had to go all the way out through Enchanted Knolls, around East Blithedale, back up to Camino Alto to get to. And if you shot a straight road to across, you could literally cut that time — you could take 70 percent off that travel time.

0:45:28: So everybody on the public safety side of the ledger wanted that road through. There were environmentalists and a number of other groups that didn't want the road to go through. Planning the Bayfront Park was delayed for a long time while they argued that out, and finally no road was built, as you know, and the master plan for the park was finally completed. During my time with the city, the master plan was completed and adopted, and the park was completed. And that's saying something, 'cause as much as I love my job with the city, things don't necessarily move fast in the city. 'Cause you mentioned the community center — that was 15 years in the planning process.

0:46:11 Ed Addeo: Yes, I recall.

0:46:13 Don Hunter: And from a staff perspective, it was done correctly. We put together a group of citizens, and really high-powered people, nice group and they really worked hard at it, but they ended up with a community center much grander than anything staff ever envisioned for the project. I'm sure you've heard the story that at one point and time they were even talking about putting a velodrome on the roof.

0:46:37 Ed Addeo: Yeah, I remember that.

0:46:40 Don Hunter: Fortunately that didn't get done. But when we originally talked about it, there was no envisioning a pool, but the group worked, they had public hearings, and invited ideas, and they worked and they worked. Then it took 15 years because we took a backseat to this, to the library expansion project which came up. We knew that the community center was going to use a lot less public financing and a lot more private fundraising, and it was gonna have to be a lengthy process to get the money in place. And this was a bond measure.

0:47:19 Ed Addeo: That finally happened when you were city manager, right?

0:47:23 Don Hunter: It was opened when I was city manager. The building contracts were awarded while Doug Dawson was still here. So it was under construction before I took over. But both the Bayfront Park and the community center are a testament to the tenaciousness of this community and to the fact that this community finds a way to get things done that a lot of towns don't. The amount of private donations, the amount of

work and energy and — by donations I don't mean just cash. We had a building committee, of people that worked — I was the staff liaison, but I had Jerry Cahill of Cahill Construction, I had Rich Robins of Wareham Development, I had Gary Van Acker of Van Acker Construction and Dennis Fisco of Seagate on my building committee. And so we'd hold regular meetings with them and we'd invite the contractor in and he would fill them in with what's going on, I'd fill them in on my concerns, and this guy would try to run out his usual contractor "This is why I need a change order" stuff, and these guys just kept him in line. They really knew their business and they kept the cost of that building where it was supposed to be and —

0:48:46 It took a lot of time, a lot of time they donated to that project. By the same token we have an organization called the Friends of the Fields here. We have top-notch athletic fields because of them. Those aren't city dollars out there; those are private dollars that they raised and put into it. So, Mill Valley is blessed, not only that, but great elected officials going all the way back to as long as I can remember from Bob Huber in the '50s all the way through Michael Warnum and Joseph Sheeks in the '60s, to when I was there, Betsey Cutler and Kathleen Foote, Dick Spotswood, and Dennis Fisco, and —

0:49:25 Ed Addeo: Ivan.

0:49:25 Don Hunter: Ivan Poutiatine, Dick Jessup, you can go on forever, I mean, people serving for the right reason not because they wanna be assemblymen next but —

0:49:34 Ed Addeo: Right, right.

0:49:35 Don Hunter: It's their time in the box to help guide their city and then they step aside. Mill Valley has the unwritten two-term rule, which is unheard of in a small town. A lot of times you get a mayor that's there for 32 years.

0:49:50 Ed Addeo: Yeah, yeah.

0:49:52 Don Hunter: And that's when you get into trouble. If you have the term up — I can only think of — well, since the '50s, in the '50s we had people over two terms, but since then I can only think of one and he pretty much had his arm twisted to do a third term.

0:50:12 Ed Addeo: I think the last third term was Spotswood.

0:50:14 Don Hunter: Yeah, that's the one I'm thinking of. He got his arm twisted. I think people said, "He can't leave, we need some continuity," and he did it. And I think he'll tell you that by the end of the third term he was ready to go.

0:50:25 Ed Addeo: Yeah, yeah.

0:50:27 Don Hunter: But, so, when you do that, when you hand that term over, and when you do your job correctly as a city council — by that I mean you put good citizens

on your commissions, and you bring them up to understand the city — then you got candidates to run the next time. And you don't have candidates running on a single issue.

0:50:44 Ed Addeo: Yeah.

0:50:46 Don Hunter: You know, "I want my street paved!"

0:50:48 Ed Addeo: So, okay, you're coming up through the ranks, and how did you come to be a city manager?

0:50:56 Don Hunter: I came to be city manager primarily because of Doug Dawson. Doug Dawson was city manager. I worked for one, two, three —

0:51:09 Ed Addeo: He was after Vern Hazen.

0:51:10 Don Hunter: After Vern Hazen, yeah. I worked for Ron Usher for a short period of time, and then Vern Hazen came in, then Doug came in. Doug was in Corte Madera before he came over to Mill Valley, and Doug did two things really, really well. He did everything really well; he's the best city manager that I've ever met any place. Granted that he's a small town city manager, and that's what I love about my job: I love being in small towns where you know most of the people and people can reach out and touch you. I'm sure that there are people that are trying to manage San Jose and places like that that are probably technically better than Doug, but I'd be surprised.

0:51:47: But, one of the things that he did, he brought talent up from below. He saw something in you, he'd put you in a place that you could try to use that; and he came to me and asked me if I would be his assistant city manager/director of Parks and Recreation, still running the Parks and Recreation Department, but also be assistant city manager. I thought about it, and it was perfect for me 'cause I was ready to be looking for a bigger city or something, 'cause we all want more challenge in life. That's what keeps you going to work every morning. And so, I could do that and not leave, not uproot my, at that point, family. I had kids then.

0:52:30: I said yes, despite the fact that it was — my huge raise was the title, that's all I got. [chuckles] But it was wonderful. It was really good. By this time, when I first — I should step back one minute 'cause when I was first director of Parks and Recreation, it wasn't really Parks and Recreation, it was just Recreation. Parks had been, was being run by Public Works. So, I worked with Vern Hazen to bring the two back together, 'cause my perspective was always that the parks were there to serve the people and that it didn't matter if the green was perfect, and if the shrubs were perfectly groomed if you were shutting the park down and people couldn't use it to get it that way. Or if you were turning on the water in the middle of the day when there was supposed to be events, and that happened on multiple occasions. So we got it back together, and at that point Public Works had it out to contract. Cagwin & Dorward was running it. Cagwin & Dorward is a really good firm, they did a good job.

0:53:39 Don Hunter: Cagwin & Dorward?

0:53:40 Ed Addeo: Cagwin & Dorward. But, they were more about green, they were more about the beauty of their product rather than the people using their product. And so we brought it back in house and we stole their supervisor — it was Rick Misuraca who's been in Mill Valley forever, just retired a couple of years ago. He and I had a great relationship and he brought the parks to where they are. He is the one who worked with Friends of the Fields to get all the fields done. He was just great. So I had Rick, and I knew that I didn't have to spend the kind of time in the parks that I had in the past. I had at that point, a woman by the name of Carlene McCart.

0:54:26 Don Hunter: Carlene McCart?

0:54:28 Ed Addeo: Yeah, she's now the director of Parks and Recreation, San Rafael. But she was my recreation supervisor, and so I had good people. I knew I could take Doug's offer, and just be an administrator in Parks and Recreation and learn the rest of the management business. And so I did, from Doug. He had me be acting temporary department heads for other departments sometimes; he had me work with Public Safety and learn the issues of that end of the business. Which is, I gotta tell you, that's a stressful business. I would not wanna be a police chief.

0:55:10 Ed Addeo: No.

0:55:12 Don Hunter: So I did all of those things and then I also compiled the city budget. That's where you really learn what goes on, because nothing goes on if it's not funded. So, I did that, worked with the finance director, had meetings with all of the department heads, go over their requests, we'd trim it down and we'd try to present something to Doug, that a) was within his guidelines, 'cause there was some — government, like everything else, goes through tough years and good years. And Mill Valley has — I have no idea what's going on now, but I assume it's still the same — that we've always insisted on having a solid reserve so that you have rainy day funds. You always had to keep that plentiful. I learned a lot, and then I also did labor relations when I was assistant city manager, so that's how I got into that. Then, when Doug retired, he retired relatively young.

0:56:14 Ed Addeo: He did.

0:56:16 Don Hunter: I tell this story to people because I think it really explains it. I was kidding him and said, "Doug what the heck's the matter with you? We had a deal, you were gonna work until a year before I retired. Then I was gonna just be city manager for a year, and then I was gonna go out as city manager. How come you're going out so early?" He got all serious, and said, "You know when I started this business, I had a bucket full of patience. My bucket's empty and I gotta go." I learned quickly that your bucket does empty in that job.

0:56:45 Ed Addeo: You got to understand what he meant. [chuckles]

0:56:47 Don Hunter: Yeah. But then I became city manager after that.

0:56:50 Ed Addeo: What year was that?

0:56:53 Don Hunter: '98 I think?

0:56:54 Ed Addeo: '98?

0:56:55 Don Hunter: Yeah.

0:56:55 Ed Addeo: And you did it for how long?

0:56:57 Don Hunter: Eight years.

0:56:58 Ed Addeo: Eight years?

0:56:58 Don Hunter: Eight, almost nine, 2007.

0:57:01 Ed Addeo: What are some of the highlight memories from when you were running the city?

0:57:08 Don Hunter: Wow.

0:57:11 Ed Addeo: Couple of floods.

0:57:13 Don Hunter: Couple of floods. Those aren't highlights, those are lowlights. [chuckles]

0:57:14 Ed Addeo: Oh that's right. Okay.

0:57:19 Don Hunter: Yeah. The highlights were I think seeing the community center open and being there for that.

0:57:25 Ed Addeo: Seeing the what?

0:57:25 Don Hunter: The community center open and being there for that. I had spent so much of my professional career on that, to see it actually happen; and then, to see it embraced by the community the way it was and still is today. That's really a highlight. Also, being able to see Mill Valley get through the tech bubble burst and go through the budget problems we had and come out the other side. I'd seen three or four different ones, I'd seen Prop 13, I'd seen the late '70s downturn, but the tech bubble was when I was city manager. I had to go through the cutbacks with all the departments and to see us come out the other side and still have all the services intact. I felt pretty good about that. The lowlights are the exciting parts. It's the floods — and the last one is really probably what led me to retire when I did.

0:58:38: First of all, being city manager of a small town, especially your home town, is about as good as it gets. You never have the same day twice. Which is the good thing about going to work, there's always something new and challenging. Not always fun, but there's always something new and challenging. I loved it. But I really did, after a number of years, get to understand what Doug was talking about. The buck does stop there. If you have to pass it on to the city council you're not doing your job very well. So, it gets stressful and you take abuse. But for the most part I really did enjoy it. Then, when we had the New Year's Eve flood — 2006 I think it was. We opened the emergency command center at the public safety building and I went down and 36 hours later I'm still there. I go, "Ahh, I gotta call up my son." I call up Dillon, I say "Dillon, I'm sorry. I can't go to the 49er game with you today. I'm really sorry." He said, "Don't worry dad, I'm used to it." That's kind of an "Ah-ha" moment.

0:59:43 Ed Addeo: Bingo. Yeah.

0:59:44 Don Hunter: So, it was time. The kids were growing, but they've given up a lot for me. I was able to do a lot with them; I still coached them in Little League, and I'd miss a game now and again. But it was an "Ah-ha" moment. That and Bob Canepa's heart attack. Bob was one of the —

1:00:04 Ed Addeo: Bob Canepa?

1:00:04 Don Hunter: Canepa, he was a good friend in Rotary with me and owned Mill Valley Market. He had a heart attack, and he's two years older than me, and I started thinking about, "Am I gonna work until I drop?" So those two things kind of pushed me toward the end of my career and looking back on it I think it was right. I think I was getting to the point where my patience wasn't what it should've been.

1:00:31 Ed Addeo: Speaking of your kids, let's go back now to family life.

1:00:34 Don Hunter: Okay.

1:00:35 Ed Addeo: You come back from Ferguson, you're married a year. When did the kids come along?

1:00:43 Don Hunter: Donovan my oldest, came nine years later.

1:00:45 Ed Addeo: Nine years?

1:00:46 Don Hunter: Yeah. We joke in the house: I bought my wife a lot of animals to delay the decision; we started with canaries and ended up with dogs; if I waited any longer I was gonna have to buy her a horse. Susan dropped out of school to get married so she went back to school when we came back. So we waited for her to do that and we waited for her to work for a while and then at that point we also did some traveling, which we wanted to do before we had kids, 'cause Lord knows when you have kids you

stop traveling.

1:01:22 Ed Addeo: That's right.

1:01:26 Don Hunter: It was 10 years after we got married. We had our first son, then three years our second — that's Dillon is the second.

1:01:31 Ed Addeo: Donovan and Dillon.

1:01:32 Don Hunter: Donovan and Dillon. I wasn't a child of the '70s.

1:01:36 Ed Addeo: So what are they doing now?

1:01:37 Don Hunter: Donovan is an attorney in San Francisco, and he's just giving me my first grandson, Connor Roy.

1:01:43 Ed Addeo: Congratulations.

1:01:45 Don Hunter: And Dillon works for MGA Healthcare recruiting and placing nurses, and so they're both gainfully employed now, off my payroll.

1:01:54 Ed Addeo: Are they both married?

1:01:55 Don Hunter: Dillon has a live-in but they're not married, and Donovan is married and has been for, gosh going on five years.

1:02:04 Ed Addeo: Great. Okay, so, over the years, since you first moved to Mill Valley at the age of three until right now, what are some of the major changes you've seen in the town?

1:02:20 Don Hunter: You know the answer to this. [chuckles]

1:02:21 Ed Addeo: I have to say. I've read a lot of oral histories and I know the answer, but I gotta ask you.

1:02:27 Don Hunter: The easy answer is traffic, and also the composition of the community. Traffic of course — like I mentioned earlier we could have boat races on Blithedale, when I lived in the corner of Blithedale and Nelson. And if you see a car you'd step back and let him go by and go back to racing your boats. If I lived there now, I wouldn't let my kids outside, and I noticed too that, by the way, that house that I was in, now has a fence around it the whole way so the kids can probably play outside and be safe. It didn't used to. And that goes back to when we were kids, and I'm sure the same for you, it was one car in a household. Dad had the car and he took it to work. Mom walked 'cause we didn't have a second car until I was in junior high, maybe even about freshmen year in high school. And the kids would ride bikes everywhere.

1:03:26: We played in Boyle Park constantly and you'd just bike up there. Now two cars in every house, it's a God-given right you get a car when you turn 16, au pair or nanny, pool guy, garden guy, house cleaner, and I don't know what percentage but always seems like a high percentage of houses are under construction. We've seen the enemy, it's us. Look at the population numbers from 1960 to now, we're not that much bigger population-wise. We're probably five times bigger vehicle-wise. It's just astounding. Mom and dad would never think to say you can't ride your bike on this street. You went any place and it was okay. But the other thing was —

1:04:20 Ed Addeo: Now everybody who lives in the house has a car.

1:04:22 Don Hunter: Oh yeah, unless they're underage and theirs is in the garage waiting for them when they turn 16.

1:04:26 Ed Addeo: That's right.

1:04:28 Don Hunter: But you also didn't need a car as much because all the services were local. You had gas stations, that were gas stations and mechanics. You had an electrician and a plumber and all those people with offices locally. You had hardware stores; you had all of the things that you needed to run your life in Mill Valley. That's not the case anymore.

1:04:55 Ed Addeo: Right. I hear people complaining they can't buy a spool of thread or a decent shirt in Mill Valley.

1:05:01 Don Hunter: That's probably true. Well you can buy a shirt you just have to mortgage your house to get it.

1:05:06 Ed Addeo: Go get a \$200 shirt, yeah.

1:05:08 Don Hunter: Yeah, yeah. So that has changed. Not only the school teachers don't live here, they used to; the police don't live here, they used to. The firefighters because of their shift schedules they can be as far as — when I was still working we had some in foothills who would drive down because they could afford a nice house there. So that's changed too, and when that changes then you got a commuting community 'cause you got to go someplace to get something. So those are the biggest things, and then I think that the fabric of the community changes when you're not seeing your teacher in the grocery store, when you're not talking to the guy who fixed your plumbing for you.

1:05:54: Random Motors — which was my first job ever at 14 years old, I swept the floors — down there on Miller Avenue. The head mechanic was two doors down from us. Those people don't live here anymore.

1:06:05 Ed Addeo: Yeah, I remember when — remember Jean Barnard?

1:06:08 Don Hunter: Oh yeah.

1:06:09 Ed Addeo: I remember when she was running for city council, like 40 years ago or so, 45. She used to say the biggest enemy to the future of Mill Valley was the automobile.

1:06:21 Don Hunter: She was probably right.

1:06:21 Ed Addeo: Absolutely right.

1:06:23 Don Hunter: Yeah. So those are the biggest changes. The other thing, and it's part and parcel of all of that, is we don't let our kids be kids. When it was summer and I was growing up in Mill Valley, the parade would start out in Alto, come by my place in Nelson, and we'd all jump on our bikes; we'd keep going and we'd have a baseball game by the time we got to Boyle Park. You were up there all day. You'd play all day. When the five o'clock whistle goes off you know you've got 10 minutes to get home or you're in trouble with mom. People don't entertain themselves like — they have to be in an organized program. It has to be soccer, it has to be synchronized swimming, whatever. Kids aren't kids. We hiked through the creeks. We caught polliwogs. All of the things — kids don't do that now. It was a marvelous place to be a child. You had the mountain. You had creeks everywhere. You had hills to cardboard slide on.

1:07:24 Ed Addeo: Today, the kids are all programmed.

1:07:25 Don Hunter: Oh, of course they are. We used to get in trouble with ours, 'cause we'd make 'em call their friends and go play at the school, and they figured it out. It is fun and they'd do the same things that we shouldn't have done when we were younger. They'd run around on the school roof down there. They'd go in the marsh and come back with stickers all over 'em from chasing polliwogs, but those are the things that give you memories.

1:07:53 Ed Addeo: Yeah, yeah. Okay, let's see. What didn't we cover? You mentioned you had a sister. What's her name?

1:08:02 Don Hunter: Her name is Gayle.

1:08:04 Ed Addeo: What's she do?

1:08:04 Don Hunter: Gayle works for PricewaterhouseCoopers. She's an office manager. She's had an interesting journey. She started out in recreation, like I did. I should mention, I probably didn't, the reason Susan and I met is because she was also in recreation and she was in the recreation department at San Jose State when I was, and I never met her there. I met her in San Diego. So at one point, very early in my career, if you wanted to do something recreationally in Southern Marin, you came through the Hunters, 'cause Susan worked for Corte Madera, my sister ran Strawberry Recreation District, and I was in Mill Valley. It never really clicked for Gayle, so she retired at an early age.

1:08:58 Ed Addeo: Is she married?

1:09:00 Don Hunter: Was.

1:09:00 Ed Addeo: Was married.

1:09:00 Don Hunter: Was married. No kids. She retired at an early age and then went to work for Bank of America for a significant time, 10 years or so, then she retired again. Took another break. So she's had a different life than me. She's gone through four different careers and she loves what she's doing, but I think she's just about ready to retire. She's two years older than me. So it's fun having her close. I'm lucky that I have all the family close. We don't have Susan's brothers close, but everybody else is close.

1:09:34 Ed Addeo: Yes. Where do you live now?

1:09:36 Don Hunter: I live in San Rafael in the Glenwood area.

1:09:39 Ed Addeo: Okay, let's see, what have we not covered?

1:09:44 Don Hunter: I think we've just about done it.

1:09:45 Ed Addeo: Done career, family, kids, Mill Valley.

1:09:49 Don Hunter: You know, like this morning I got here a little early and I walked through Old Mill Park. I haven't been down here for a few months and Mill Valley's still a marvelous place. It really is magical. It's frustrating when you're sitting, stuck in traffic, but when you get out of the car, this is still one of the most beautiful places in the world.

1:10:12 Ed Addeo: It really is. Last night I went to — or is this Tuesday? Sunday night I went to the Rita Abrams show at the Throck⁴.

1:10:20 Don Hunter: Yeah, I read about that in the paper.

1:10:22 Ed Addeo: And it was all about what a fabulous place Mill Valley is, because of the song, of course, the song she wrote, "Mill Valley".

1:10:30 Don Hunter: Yeah, yeah, that came out when I was in Missouri.

1:10:33 Ed Addeo: Oh really?

1:10:34 Don Hunter: I heard it on the radio there.

1:10:35 Ed Addeo: Is that right?

⁴ Throckmorton Theatre—Ed.

1:10:36 Don Hunter: Yeah.

1:10:37 Ed Addeo: She still gets letters from all over the world.

1:10:40 Don Hunter: I'm sure.

1:10:40 Ed Addeo: 45 years later.

1:10:41 Don Hunter: I read, I guess two years ago, she finally had to move out of Mill Valley.

1:10:46 Ed Addeo: Yeah she got priced out.

1:10:47 Don Hunter: That's sad. That's sad.

1:10:47 Ed Addeo: She's in Corte Madera now.

1:10:49 Don Hunter: Yeah.

1:10:51 Ed Addeo: Well, okay, I can't think of anything else unless you can.

1:10:56 Don Hunter: No, I think that's it. Thank you.

1:10:58 Ed Addeo: So thank you for doing this. Thank you for your service to Mill Valley. A lot of people think that you were the best city manager we've ever had, including me. And so that's about it. Thanks a lot.

1:11:11 Don Hunter: Thank you.